

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, PO

SUBJECT: US STATEMENT ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION WE ARE PASSING TO YOU THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON PORTUGAL MADE BY RICHARD ERICSON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF PM, ON FEBRUARY 8 BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS: QUOTE THE QUESTION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR PORTUGAL HAS BEEN EXAMINED BY THIS ADMINISTRATION AND, I AM AUTHORIZED TO ASSURE YOU, HAS ITS STRONG SUPPORT. WE WILL SHORTLY SUBMIT TO THE CONGRESS A BILL AMENDING THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT TO PERMIT A \$30 MILLION GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR PORTUGAL IN FISCAL YEAR 1977. APPROPRIATION OF THE FULL \$30 MILLION HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED, BUT WE NEED STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO ALLOCATE ADDITIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE FUNDS TO PORTUGAL. AS WE HAVE AVAILABLE \$15 MILLION IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE FUNDS WHICH CAN BE USED FOR PORTUGAL IF THE NECESSARY STATUTORY

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AUTHORITY IS ENACTED, THE APPROPRIATION REQUEST BEFORE YOU IS FOR THE REMAINING BALANCE OF \$15 MILLION REQUIRED TO FINANCE THIS PROGRAM.

2. PORTUGAL, A CHARTER MEMBER OF NATO, HAS ONLY RECENTLY EMERGED FROM FIVE DECADES OF DICTATORSHIP AND TWO YEARS

OF POLITICAL TURBULENCE. THIS INHERITANCE FROM THE PAST IS A HEAVY BURDEN ON THE NATION'S FUTURE. THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN UNDER SEVERE STRAIN, BUT A NEW GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN FREELY ELECTED AND ITS COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY AND TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY IS FIRM. IT WILL TAKE TIME AND DEDICATED EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN THE INSTITUTIONS THAT A STRONG DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMY REQUIRE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES AND ITS NATO ALLIES SHOULD ASSIST IN THOSE EFFORTS.

3. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS REQUIRING ATTENTION OF THE ARMED FORCES--UNTIL RECENTLY HEAVILY ENGAGED IN THE DEBILITATING COLONIAL WARS IN AFRICA, AND THEN INVOLVED IN THE BITTER FACTIONAL AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES THAT WRACKED THE COUNTRY. NOW, THE ARMED FORCES HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR BARRACKS. THE NEW MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS INTENT ON REBUILDING IN THE ARMED SERVICES A SENSE OF THEIR PROPER PROFESSIONAL MISSION AND ENABLING PORTUGAL TO PLAY A STRONGER, MORE APPROPRIATE ROLE IN THE NATO ALLIANCE. THE FUNDS WE ARE REQUESTING IN THIS SUPPLEMENTAL WILL FACILITATE THIS CHANGE IN PORTUGUESE POLICY AND THE STRENGTHENING OF NATO DEFENSES. TO THIS END, THE MONEY WILL MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR OWN NATIONAL SECURITY.

4. THE REORGANIZATION, REDUCTION IN SIZE, AND MODERNIZATION OF THE PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES AND OUR OTHER NATO ALLIES. WE, AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, PARTICIPATED IN SURVEYS

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OF THE CAPABILITIES OF THE PORTUGUESE FORCES IN 1976. WE AGREE WITH THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY LEADERSHIP THAT A PRINCIPAL ELEMENT IN THE STRENGTHENED ARMED FORCES IS THE CREATION OF A PARTIALLY AIR-TRANSPORTABLE INFANTRY BRIGADE WHICH WOULD BE CAPABLE OF QUICK RESPONSES IN CRISIS SITUATIONS. IN ACCORD WITH THE PLANS OF THE NATO SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, THIS BRIGADE IS TO BE INTEGRATED IN THE NATO COMMAND STRUCTURE AND HAS BEEN ASSIGNED THE MISSION OF REINFORCEMENT OF NATO FORCES IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE. AN AD HOC COMMITTEE ON ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL HAS BEEN FORMED AT NATO HEADQUARTERS AND SECRETARY GENERAL LUNS AND NATO MILITARY LEADERS HAVE ALSO GIVEN ENCOURAGEMENT AND ADVICE DURING THE INITIAL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRIGADE. PROPERLY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED, THE BRIGADE WOULD BECOME PORTUGAL'S PRINCIPAL GROUND FORCE UNIT AND ITS MAIN CONTRIBUTION TO ALLIED MILITARY STRENGTH.

5. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT OUTSIDE SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL IF THIS VERY POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT IS TO SUCCEED. IN ITS

PRESENT ECONOMIC STATE, PORTUGAL DOES NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO COMMIT TO THE PURCHASE OF THE NEW EQUIPMENT THAT WILL BE REQUIRED, AND IT IS UNABLE TO TAKE ON ADDED FOREIGN DEBT FOR SUCH PURPOSES. PORTUGAL IS USING ALL OF ITS DEBT CAPABILITY TO MEET CRITICAL NEEDS TO RESTORE THE ECONOMY. THE UNITED STATES AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD IN ATTEMPTING TO SECURE THE GRANT ASSISTANCE NECESSARY AND WE TWO NATIONS ARE WORKING WITH THE OTHER NATO MEMBERS TO ARRANGE APPROPRIATE SHARING OF THE SUPPORT BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ALLIANCE. THUS FAR, THE UNITED STATES HAS LOANED PORTUGAL FOR THIS FISCAL YEAR A SMALL NUMBER OF TANKS, ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS AND TRAINER AIRCRAFT UNDER MAP AUTHORITY. GERMANY HAS PROVIDED TWENTY G-91 AIRCRAFT, INCLUDING SIX SPECIAL TRAINERS. THE GRANT FUNDS BEING REQUESTED WOULD REPRESENT THE FIRST SUBSTANTIAL US CONTRIBUTION TO THE

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EFFORT AND WOULD CERTAINLY SERVE AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR OTHERS TO ASSUME A SHARE OF THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. OUR FUNDS WOULD BE USED TO PROVIDE ONE C-130 AIR TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT WITH SPARES AND SUPPORT, AND PRIORITY GROUND FORCE EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING 66 M-113A1 ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS. FOR ITS PART THE FRG HAS INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO SUPPLY IN 1977 TANKS AND ARTILLERY.

6. SHOULD THE UNITED STATES DECLINE TO TAKE PART IN THIS EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN THE PORTUGUESE FORCES, I FEAR IT COULD HAVE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES NOT ONLY FOR THE COHESION OF THE DEVELOPING NATO PROGRAM TO ASSIST THE PORTUGUESE FORCES, BUT ALSO FOR THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN THE COUNTRY. I URGE THE SUBCOMMITTEE TO APPROVE THE MODEST REQUEST FOR THE FUNDS NEEDED TO CARRY OUT THIS IMPORTANT PROGRAM. END QUOTE.

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